Rethinking the Human Condition in a Hyperconnected Era: Why Freedom is Not About Sovereignty But About Beginnings

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1 The Digital Transition as a Reality-Check for Plato's Utopia Failure

Mary Midgley sees philosophy as plumbing, something that nobody notices until it goes wrong: '*Then suddenly we become aware of some bad smells, and we have to take up the floorboards and look at the concepts of even the most ordinary piece of thinking. The great philosophers … noticed how badly things were going wrong, and made suggestions about how they could be dealt with*.' (Midgley 2001).

The bad smells, as I perceive them, concern the proliferation of truisms (including about progress, change and innovation), wrong alternatives ("either/or" framing when the "both/and" would be much more efficient), and fears and delusion when it comes to thinking and speaking about politics and the public space. It would be wrong to say that we are in totalitarian times: fascism and communism have been defeated and democracy is alive, at least in the EU and other parts of the world. However, I feel that we are unconsciously undermining essential elements of the human condition, as set out by Hannah Arendt in her seminal book *The human condition* (Arendt 1959): the antidotes against the risk of totalitarianism are thereby weakened to a dangerous extent so that it would not take much more than a spark for the public space to collapse, and this even under the cover of the best governance intentions.

The digital transition is an opportunity to "fix the pipes", as put by Mary Midgley: it brings about a reality by which some key assumptions underlying our worldview, since Plato, lose ground insofar as they simply stop being efficient. The digital transition projects us into a world where nature is pervasively intertwined with sensors, information devices and machines; we thus increasingly experience a reactive and talkative nature, an animated nature, where it becomes more and more difficult

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to distinguish between what is "given"[1] and what is fabricated. Furthermore, the digital transition creates the worldly conditions for the actual dissolution of the objectivity standpoint: indeed, we "touch" the fact that the abundance of information does not give access to an omniscient/omnipotent posture, but rather that accumulation of knowledge pushes ever further and redefines the remit of what is to be known. Like the sea recovering from the wave behind a boat, reality is thick and dense and recomposes itself, undermining any possibility to acquire or sustain a posture of omniscience and omnipotence.

It is paradoxical to realise that it is exactly when, and probably because, we can envisage what a total and ubiquitous knowledge would mean, that the omniscience/omnipotence utopia can appear as a useless and deceptive fiction. By bringing us to the point where the omniscience/omnipotence utopia can indeed be seen as a chimera, the digital transition, in a paradoxical gesture, calls for re-endorsing the fact that human action[2] is precisely characterized by its irreversibility and its unpredictability, and this is not necessarily for the worse[3]. Arendt writes in the late fifties: "*Exasperation with the threefold frustration of action—the unpredictability of its outcome, the irreversibility of the process, and the anonymity of its authors- is almost as old as recorded history. It has always been a great temptation, for men of action no less than for men of thought, to find a substitute for action in the hope that the realm of human affairs may escape the haphazardness and moral irresponsibility inherent in a plurality of agents. The remarkable monotony of the proposed solutions throughout our recorded history testifies to the elemental simplicity of the matter. Generally speaking, they always amount to seeking shelter from action's calamities in an activity where one man, isolated from all others, remains master of his doings from beginning to end* [….] *Plato's solution of the philosopher-king, whose 'wisdom' solves the perplexities of action as though they were problems of*

[1] In passing, one may challenge this common way to denote what is not fabricated! What is not fabricated is deemed to be ….given. The question arising immediately is then: why necessarily given by someone? Why this compulsion that is unveiled by this vocabulary to see a "Big Other", behind everything that is?

[2] The word "action" is to be understood as defined by Arendt in the Human Condition. Arendt proposes to describe the vita activa by distinguishing three activities: labor, work and action. "Labor is the activity which corresponds to the biological process of the human body, whose spontaneous growth, metabolism and eventual decay are bound to the vital necessities produced and fed into the life process by labor. The human condition of labor is ife itself […].Work is the activity which corresponds to the unnaturalness of human existence, which is not embedded in, and whose mortality is not compensated by, the species' ever-recurring life cycle. Work provides an "artificial" world of things, distinctly different from all natural surroundings […].The human condition of work is worldliness. Action, the only activity that goes on directly between men without the intermediary of things or matter, corresponds to the human condition of plurality, to the fact that men, not Man, live on the earth and inhabit the world. While all aspects of the human condition are somehow related to politics, this plurality is specifically the condition, not only the conditio sine qua non, but the conditio per quam—of all political life." HC, pp. 9–10 (apart from the italics in the last sentence, which are from Arendt, the highlights earlier in the quote have been made by the author of this article in view of highlighting the distinctions between labor, work and action). HC, p. 9. More on this tripartition later.

[3] More details about the shifts in the digital transition in the *Onlife Background Note*, Chap. 11.

cognition, is only one –and by no means the less tyrannical- variety of one-man rule" (Arendt 1959, pp. 197–199).

Today, the regular call on the need for leadership and political will attest that not less than before, policy-making is pervaded by the quest of "*seeking shelter from action's calamities in an activity where one man, isolated from all others, remains master of his doings from beginning to end…*" (Arendt 1959, p. 197) The perception that ideal freedom is best actualised in sovereignty, either at collective or individual levels, is the expression of the omnipotence component of the omniscience-omnipotence utopia, while the omniscience side of it is expressed by "*the Platonic wish to substitute making for acting in order to bestow upon the realm of human affairs the solidity inherent in work and fabrication*" (Arendt 1959, p. 202).

In my view, as I hope to make clear later in this contribution, policy-making continues to rely too much on the omniscience/omnipotence utopia. Do we not regularly frame problems in terms of "lack of knowledge", as if perfect knowledge would allow perfect action? This argument, at the core of the rationale for funding research, reaches out beyond that specific purpose and pervades imaginaries. On the other hand, isn't the precautionary principle based on the idea that it is somehow possible to foresee and avoid harmful consequences, as if making decisions was about making a choice between different courses of action, as we make a choice in a menu when ordering a meal in a restaurant?

Knowing, thinking, doing and acting can only be done from within ("building the raft while swimming"[4]) and not from an external manipulative perspective. Immanence is becoming commonsensical and is to be endorsed in political terms, without this meaning nihilism or despair. This calls for taking some distance from dramatisation, as a trick, and for recovering a meaningful approach to the present, based on a responsible and modest approach to the challenges of our times. Policy-making should reclaim the present and take responsibility for the choices we make in view of generating "*islands of predictability*" (Arendt 1959, p. 220) and ensure that "*meaning has a place in this world*" (Arendt 1959, p. 212), while holding in contempt the fact that "*real stories, in distinction from those we invent, have no author*" (Arendt 1959, p. 165).

Arendt, with her notions of natality[5] and plurality[6], offers a sound basis for balancing the omniscience/omnipotence utopia and for making use of what I will call an Arendtian axiomatic reset in policy framing. Reclaiming natality and plurality allows aligning freedom with plurality, instead of seeing plurality as a constraint to freedom.

[4] This is my take from this sentence brought about by Luciano Floridi and which became the motto of the Onlife initiative. See the *Onlife Manifesto,* Chap. 2.

[5] Natality is not to be understood as "birth rate". It is a technical term in Arendt's thought expressing the fact that the human condition is characterized by the fact of birth at least as much as by the fact of death. For Arendt, the sustainability of the world is ensured by the fact men and women constantly come to the world by birth and freedom is intimately linked to the capacity to begin.

[6] For the technical meaning of plurality, see later in this chapter, under 3.2.: Embracing Plurality.

After having addressed the influence of the omniscience/omnipotence prejudice over policy-making, and after having presented how the notions of plurality and natality allow overcoming such prejudice, with the Arendtian axiomatic reset, I shall propose an actualisation of the distinction between the private and public and between agents, nature and artefacts. Building on these new distinctions, I shall propose to consider policy-making, not only in terms of seeking control over the future, but also in being responsive to new meanings and providing the tools to allow agents to orient themselves in the world as it evolves and live a decent life.

2 Omniscience/Omnipotence: Modern Utopia, Human Condition's Dystopia?

2.1 The Centrality of Control in Knowledge and Action

In scientific terms, humans are treated as mere scientific objects, i.e., they are elucidated with a view to predict and/or to manipulate them[7]. As pointed out by Arendt, the scientific discourse is indexed on necessity: "*what science and the quest of knowledge are after is* irrefutable *truth, that is, propositions human beings are not free to reject—they are compelling*" (Arendt 1978, p. 59). In scientific terms, contingency is just another name for "epistemic failure", a not-yet-known. By denoting contingency with the term uncertainty, i.e., as a negative, certainty is made the norm or the ideal. And scientific knowledge is paired with certainty of facts, even after several decades of quantum mechanics, which rather teaches us that uncertainty and indeterminacy are intrinsic to scientific knowledge as well. This scientific register positions humans as an object of enquiry, a "material", inherently heteronomous i.e., as fully determined by external materials, forces and processes.

When considered in ethical terms, as Arendt put it ironically, "attemps to define human nature almost invariably end with some construction of a deity…" (Arendt 1959, p. 12). Furthermore, she reckons that freedom has wrongly been identified with sovereignty in political and philosophical thought: "*If it were true that sovereignty and freedom are the same, then indeed no man could be free, because sovereignty, the ideal of uncompromising self-sufficiency and mastership, is contradictory to the very condition of plurality. No man can be sovereign because not one man, but men, inhabit the earth—and not, as the tradition since Plato holds, because of man's limited strength, which makes him depend upon the help of others*" (Arendt 1959, p. 210). Understanding freedom as sovereignty has a huge price, the price of reality: "*sovereignty is possible only in imagination, paid for by the price of reality*" (Arendt 1959, p. 211). Ethical/philosophical narratives of what it is to be human contend with the need to escape from, or at least to balance with,

[7] In passing, no wonder machine will end-up being like humans, since we have patiently paved the way for that by thinking of humans as machines: "Thought itself, when it became 'reckoning with consequences', became a function of the brain, with the result that electronic instruments are found to fulfil these functions much better than we ever could."—HC, p. 294.

a set of "things to-be-avoided": the scientifically-induced heteronomy as set out above with the second categorical imperative of Kant[8], and the Hobbesian "state of nature" and "war of all against all". "Humanity" in ethical terms is defined as a common opposite to these stance-to-be-avoided: human-as-a-machine, human-as-a-self-defeated-violent-and-careless-individual. This violent and careless aspect is by the way strangely referred to our animality, as if being human was defined as being different from animals.

A common feature of these scientific and ethical/philosophical approaches of what it is to be human is "control": when in scientific terms, control by others (including by myself-subject on myself-object); when in ethical terms, self-control (including with the help of God-as-a-reference) or control on the future course of events (freedom-as-sovereignty). But control, when decontextualized and pushed beyond its relevant remit, has more to do with destruction than with anything else, while action is precisely characterised by its unpredictability, hence the inherent impossibility to control its consequences: "*Whereas men have always been capable of destroying whatever was the product of human hands and have become capable today even of the potential destruction of what man did not make –the earth and earthly nature- men never have been and never will be able to undo or even to control reliably any of the processes they start through action*" (Arendt 1959, pp. 208–209). Hence, seeking control beyond what can reasonably be predicted has also a high price, the price of plurality and freedom!

2.2 Policy-Making or the Victory of the Animal Laborans?

In "*the Vita activa and the Modern Age*" section of *The Human Condition* (Arendt 1959) , Arendt explains how the invention of the telescope changed the relationship between truth and appearance. "*Truth was no longer supposed to appear…to the mental eye of a beholder*" (Arendt 1959, p. 263). Indeed, as the telescope has demonstrated that we are fooled by our senses, "*nothing could be less trustworthy for acquiring knowledge and approaching truth than passive observation or mere contemplation. In order to be certain, one had to make sure, and in order to know, one had to do*" (Arendt 1959, p. 263). The telescope has undermined deeply and for centuries our epistemological confidence in what we perceive without instruments, either by our senses or by mere thinking and contemplation. As a result, "*in modern philosophy and thought, doubt occupies much the same central position as that occupied for all the centuries before by the Greek thaumazein, the wonder at everything that is as it is*" (Arendt 1959, p. 249). This has had a great effectiveness in the relationship with nature and the universe. Without the Cartesian "*de omnibus dubitandum est*" ("everything should be doubted"), we would not have taken the same technological path nor landed on the moon. The Cartesian doubt has shaped the relationship of men to nature in terms of questions to be answered through

[8] "Act in such a way that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, never merely as a means to an end, but always at the same time as an end."

experimental settings, and this has opened an era where, on the one hand, technological artefacts have been invented and widely spread, and where, on the other hand, the conscience of the finiteness and fragility of the earth and the environment surrounding us has arisen. The relationship between men and nature is made of triumph and pride, on the one hand, for all the technological artefacts, and fear and guilt, on the other hand, for the consequences of having "disturbed" the global ecosystem to the point that we are now feeling responsibility for it[9]. It is against this general background that the development, diffusion and uptake of information and communication technologies take place. If there is no doubt that the Cartesian doubt has played a decisive role in this course of action, the disappearance of *thaumazein* ("wonder") has had great damaging consequences, at least in the field of human affairs.

Having been fooled by our senses until Galileo and Copernicus did not prevent humanity from living on the earth and no longer being fooled by our senses did not prevent humanity from committing the notorious monstrosities of the twentieth century. The suspicion against thinking and contemplating, in favour of the confidence in doing, has led, first, to the reversal of the primacy of the *vita contemplativa* over of the *vita activa*, and, second, within the *vita activa*, it has modified the hierarchy[10] of the labour-work-action tripartition by putting work over action. Indeed, work is the activity of the doer, *par excellence*, and a telescope is an object produced by *Homo Faber*.

The signature of this reversal in today's policy-making is the importance of the "means-to-end" or instrumental logic, testified by the sequence: objectives, strategies, implementation, monitoring. Policies are meant to be means to higher ends. The risk of this means-to-end logic in policy-making is to consider that any means is good as long as it serves the end. Another shortcoming of importing the means-to-end logic in the political realm is to lock-in or close down the capacity to begin. Indeed, the Homo Faber is judged against the conformity of his work with the original plan. But the political leader will not: "*In contradistinction to fabrication, where the light by which to judge the finished product is provided by the image or model perceived beforehand by the craftsman's eye, the light that illuminates processes of action, and therefore all historical processes, appears only at their end*" (Arendt 1959, p. 171). Indeed, political actors know that their mandate cannot *only* be captured by a mere implementation of the original strategy. For example, although EU2020[11] is the overarching strategy of the Commission, it will be judged, not only on the implementation of this strategy, but more surely on its sense of opportunity in dealing appropriately with the crisis and the other events as they arise, in the course

[9] The term Anthropocene has been coined to hint at this. "It is an informal geologic chronological term that serves to mark the evidence and extent of human activities that have had a significant global impact on the Earth's ecosystems." In http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anthropocene, page view January 11, 2013.

[10] In her description of the *vita activa*, Arendt establishes a clear hierarchy between labor, work and action. Labor stands at the lower end of the hierarchy because it is indexed on necessity and action at the higher end, because it is indexed on freedom. Work stands in between.

[11] COM (2010) 2020 final. Europe 2020: A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

of time, and on its ability to take initiatives. Similarly in national contexts, electoral campaigns are never won *only* on mere implementation of past promises but also on the ability to generate trust and confidence with a winning mix of vision and skilful sense of opportunism. Hence, even if it would be stupid to deny that policy-making should be transparent, soundly-based and monitored, it would be as stupid to think that transparency, sound foundations and monitoring is all that matters. Instead, what really matters is the ability to deal with the unexpected and make sense of it. Policy-makers are judged on this very ability, their ability to begin, to impulse and to make sense, much more than on their ability to achieve pre-defined goals.

One of the main current higher ends to which policy-making is deemed to be a means is "boosting growth and jobs". This in itself has also been anticipated by Arendt, even if, in the '50s and '60s of the last century, there were no "growth and jobs" issue at the level they are today. She anticipated that beyond the reversal of action and fabrication, or the "*victory of Homo Faber*", there would be a second reversal, i.e., that the lowest of the three activities in the *vita activa* tripartition—labor—would take over work and action with the "victory of the *Animal Laborans*". Labor is the lowest of the three activities in the *vita activa*, because it is defined by Arendt as "*bound to the vital necessities*" (Arendt 1959, p. 9). It is indexed on necessity. It is highly repetitive and leaves no trace behind. It is also characterized by its processual nature, i.e. the fact that it is continuous and has no beginning nor end. Labour, in that meaning, does not allow any room for experiencing freedom, nor the pleasure of appearing in front of others and experiencing the joy of plurality. Indeed, for Arendt, what makes us human is what happens, once each of us has coped with the necessities of the biological life: "*The 'good life' as Aristotle called the life of the citizen, therefore was ….'good' to the extent that by having mastered the necessities of sheer life, by being freed from labor and work, and by overcoming the innate urge of all living creatures for their own survival, it was no longer bound to the biological life process*" (Arendt 1959, p. 33).

The "means-to-end" register that has invaded the public space turns itself into an even more pervasive register: the processual register. Policy-making has not only substituted making for acting, but it has further substituted processing for making. This is a negative trend, according to Arendt, because processes leave no room for plurality and freedom, or for meaning. The policy's increasing and almost exclusive focus on processes thereby leaves unattended a central aspect of the human condition.

One of the key features of the human condition is that human beings do not need to allocate the totality of their energy to their survival: a surplus is available. Human beings, if and when healthy, have a satiety threshold: at one point they have enough: they are not hungry, not cold, clean…and can turn to other activities, for example engaging with others or fabricating objects. That satiety threshold, or better what happens beyond it, is what allows us to experience the human condition as such and enjoy freedom.

With the centrality of the "growth and jobs" rationale in policy-making, process and necessity have pervaded the rationale for policy-making. Necessity has been hijacked to cover the survival needs of enterprises, rather than those of human be-

ings. These organisational beings have no satiety threshold. For them, by design, "more" is "better" and "enough" not part of their vocabulary! Addressing needs of a-satiable beings, or, in other words, of beings not having a satiety threshold, leads to the hegemony of necessity at the expense of any sense of freedom and plurality. It is in this sense that what Arendt calls "the social" has indeed colonised the public space. Wealth, which was a typical private concern in Greek times, became a dominant public concern. With an endless processual perspective anchored in necessity, and the oversight or denial of the notion of satiety threshold, *phronesis*, i.e. practical wisdom and prudence, a critical value for public action in the Greek polis, is substituted by *hubris*, i.e. extreme pride, arrogance and "never-enoughness" in a systemic way.

Facing this "growth and jobs" rationale, indexed on the needs of a-satiable organisations, there is another rationale: the one of precaution and fundamental rights. The a-satiability of organisations and their overarching influence on policy-making in the name of growth and jobs may distort the use of these counter-tracks, as they are sometimes put forward in absolute and irrealistic terms, with the purpose to counter the endless voracity of enterprises, as organisational beings. The problem is that this mechanical approach fails to grasp meanings, *on both sides*. Hence, policy-making is locked in a vision, which is either superseded by the overarching objective of "boosting growth and jobs" or by the quest for control, certainty and predictability. In Arendtian terms, one might say that policy-making is disconnected from endorsing the openness of the future, through a double regression, first by running away from freedom by invoking causality, i.e., with work taking precedence over action, and then by redoubling causality with necessity, i.e., with labour taking precedence over work. The loss of this double regression is plurality and meaning.

2.3 Policy-Making and the Devaluation of the Present

The modern overarching confidence in progress and the lock-in of policy-making in causality (means-to-end) and necessity (process) has deep consequences for the underlying representations of the past, the present and the future in policy-making: meaning and purpose are exported in the future, the present is …what is broken, the past balances between "golden age" and "never again"!

Future is where meaning and purpose are stored: future generations are called to justify policies, notably regarding climate change policies. Long-term objectives are set, against which current decisions are justified. The long-term perspective is value-loaded, unveiling interestingly that the short term has indeed been emptied of meaning and purpose. "Short termism" is an expression denoting the inability of policy making to form appropriate judgments of what needs to be taken into account. It is the signature of the fact that policy decisions have parted company with meaning. This is highly problematic in the perspective of natality and plurality, as will be shown later.

The past is either idealised or demonised, much more rarely simply endorsed, acknowledged and made sense of in a rationale and distanced manner.

The present is what is broken. It is indeed mainly perceived and described as what is broken and requires action to be fixed! Policies are then designed to fix those problems: low-carbon, training, budgetary discipline. The present is where problems lie and the future where solutions need to be found. Tomorrow will be better than today, *thanks* to the policies. As if there would be no need for policies or institutions if there were no problem to be fixed. In that framing, the bigger the problems and the worse the present, the easier the demonstration! Metaphorically, policy-makers tend to describe the challenges as if we had to run away from a fire or to hurry up to win a supposed race. It is about pointing to the future as a fire exit from a present in flames. This systematic, even if implicit, devaluation of the present has pervasive consequences on the mood with which men and women interact with each other and with the world. It undermines the possibilities for a rich experience of plurality and freedom.

3 The Arendtian Axiomatic Reset

"*The Platonic separation of knowing and doing has remained at the root of all theories of domination which are not mere justifications of an irreducible and irresponsible will to power*" (Arendt 1959, p. 201). This dualism between knowing and doing mirrors the dualism between soul and body, between reason and emotion, between higher ends and mere means, etc… This dualism which seems to be designed in order to keep one of the polarities at a distance is bound to fail, because what is kept at a distance springs with even more strength than if it were recognized and dealt with. Understanding –or rather standing under- the failure of the omniscience/omnipotence utopia as the ground from which the human condition can be experienced and appreciated is a critical mental operation that we suggest can be called an "axiomatic reset".

This axiomatic reset called for by Arendt stems from the lessons she draws from the darkest times of the twentieth century: seeking to confer to human affairs the solidity of the world of objects leads to monstrosities. This can be seen as a political version of the Heisenberg principle. This principle states that measuring the speed of a particle can only be done at the expense of changing its position: hence, to know the speed, you "pay the price" of not knowing its position and vice-versa. The political version of this principle, as highlighted by Arendt, goes as follows: if certainty is to be trumped over any other considerations, then we get only one outcome, the certainty *of the worse*! There cannot be certainty of the good and it is often good *enough* to ensure that the worst does *not* happen. This is not to say that nothing can be known, nor that nothing should be controlled, but it means that overestimating what can be controlled bears heavy consequences.

This is why Arendt inspires me thinking that the omniscience/omnipotence utopia is a fertile ground for totalitarianism. This is why she has repeatedly refused to be considered a political philosopher.

The Arendtian axiomatic reset is acknowledging natality and embracing plurality.

3.1 Acknowledging Natality

Humans are *not only* mortal beings. They are *also* born beings! With some irony, and a mental smile, Arendt wonders why philosophers have always considered mortality more important than natality, and ends more important than beginnings. She invites to pay much more attention to the fact that we are born beings: "*Death is the price we pay for having lived*[12]". Her philosophy is anchored in the praise of beginnings. What makes the world sustainable is precisely that human beings come to the world in a continuous flow.

Indeed, looking at human beings as beginners brings a radically different perspective than looking at them as beings that will eventually die. Let's call the latter the perspective of mortality and the former the perspective of natality.

The mainstream timeline representation, where the future (our death) is in front of us, and the past (our birth) is behind us, flows from the perspective of mortality. Acknowledging natality invites a shift in this representation. It is to privilege a vision of the future as what is yet to come. In the perspective of natality, the future is pushing us forward, instead of being what we foresee and anticipate. In that sense, the future is behind us rather than in front of us[13], because we do not see it, while the past is what we contemplate and learn from.

Let's illustrate this shift in perspectives by another couple of spatial metaphors: a road versus a spring. In the perspective of mortality, the timeline is like a road from birth to death: the present is like the point on the road where the pilgrim stands walking towards his/her destination, symbolized as the heaven, the grail or just the end. In the perspective of natality, the present is like a spring, where time, like water, flows from within the earth, and we spend our life in the present, i.e. where the water comes out.

In the perspective of mortality, the future is coloured with the certainty of our eventual death, while in the perspective of natality it is coloured by the recurrent remembrance of the "*infinite improbability*" (Arendt 1959) of our birth. In the perspective of natality, the fact that we shall eventually die does not account for a meaningful knowledge of the future; what shall eventually make sense and be worthwhile in the future is precisely what shall come as a surprise, as each of us as human beings came to this world. In that latter perspective, it is recognized that

[12] Retro-translation by the author of the Denktagebuch French version "La mort est le prix que nous payons pour la vie, pour le fait d'avoir vécu." In Journal de Pensée, vol. 2. Paris: Editions du Seuil, p. 977 (July 1970, § 66).

[13] The metaphorical approach to the timeline owes much to Lakoff and Johnson's Metaphors We Live By (1984).

"what is" is the accumulation of infinite improbabilities, more than the predictable outcome according to causal laws. While the perspective of mortality is conducive to doubt and control, the perspective of natality is conducive to confidence and wonder.

3.2 Embracing Plurality

Plurality has been mentioned regularly in this contribution: it is time now be more specific about what Arendt means with this word. As already been mentioned, for Arendt, the noblest part of the human condition is not that Man mimics a monotheist God, but instead that there is plurality: "*If philosophers, despite their necessary estrangement from the everyday life of human affairs, were ever to arrive at a true political philosophy, they would have to make the plurality of men, out of which arises the whole realm of human affairs –in its grandeur and misery- the object of their thaumazein. […] They would have to accept in something more than the resignation of human weakness the fact that 'it is not good for man to be alone'*" (Arendt 2005, pp. 38–39).

Arendt describes plurality as the coexistence of equality, specificity and reflectivity.

First, *equality* is the component of plurality that denotes the fact that plurality is what happens between agents who recognize each other as other selves. In that meaning, equality is not considered as an objective, but as an axiomatic stance. Plurality is what happens between agents, who consider each other as other selves…

Second, *specificity*, because what makes each human a human *qua* human is precisely his or her distinctness and uniqueness. As long as we treat other humans as interchangeable entities or as characterised by their attributes or qualities, i.e., as a *what*, we do not treat them as human *qua* human, but as entities that happen to be human. Plurality is what happens between agents who consider each other as other selves and who recognize an absolute specificity to each self, to the point where this specificity trumps any other characteristic to denote their identity…

Last and by no means least, the third component of plurality is the *reflective nature of identity*. For Arendt, the disclosure of the who "*can almost never be achieved as a willful purpose, as though one possessed and could dispose of this 'who' in the same manner he has and can dispose of his qualities*" (Arendt 1959, p. 159), (i.e., his *what*). The *who* appears unmistakably to others, but remains somewhat hidden from the self. It is as if our identity layed in an entity standing on our shoulder or on the back of our head and was visible by all except by oneself. Our face, which represents oneself for others, is never seen by our self through his or her own eyes. It is this reflective character of identity that confer to speech and action such a revelatory role when it comes to disclosing the *who* and not the *what*. For entities for whom the *who* matters, appearance in front of others, notably with speech and action, is a necessary condition for revealing his or her identity: "*Action and speech are so closely related because the primordial and specifically human act must at the*

same time contain the answer to the question asked of every newcomer: who are you? […]In acting and speaking, men show who they are, they reveal actively their unique personal identities and thus make their appearance in the human world[…]. Revelatory quality of speech and action comes to the fore where people are with others and neither for, nor against them, that is in sheer togetherness" (Arendt 1959, pp. 158–160).

In other words, identity is a double-key feature: one key is held by the self and one key is held by the other. Without this second key—the key held by the other—identity is not completed. This is why appearance to others in a public space is a central feature of the human condition. It also highlights why identity and interactions are so intimately connected[14], and why attention[15] is such a critical ability for human beings to experience plurality.

To sum up, plurality is what happens between agents who consider other as other selves, whose identity is inherently singular and partly hidden to the self, so that appearance among equals is the only way to disclose fully and experience one's own identity[16].

3.3 Plurality-and-Natality as an Alternative to Omniscience-and-Omnipotence

Omniscience and omnipotence are deemed to be postures from which anything, including the realization of any utopia, is possible, provided sufficient knowledge and control would be available. In an omniscience-omnipotence utopia's worldview, relationships create no surprise, as a relationship is deemed to be a causal one. In that perspective, the totality of the meaning lies in the cause. There is no room for meaning in an effect. An effect is soluble in its cause. An effect is not even an end. It is literally a non-event, since the event is all included in the cause. The omnipotence/omniscience utopia echoes the mortality perspective set out above. It closes down the opening to beginnings and is antinomic to thaumazein, as what deserves wonder, in the omniscience-omnipotence utopia's worldview, is only… omniscience and omnipotence!

The perspective of natality counters the omniscience-omnipotence utopia without falling into the drawbacks of nihilism, because it encapsulates the confidence in recurrent beginnings.

Plurality is the second element of this alternative to an omniscience-omnipotence utopia. Indeed, as we have seen above, the key features of plurality are that each entity engaged in the relationship is (i) equal (all on the same ground), (ii) singular (each *who* is unique) and (iii) partly hidden to him or herself (the reflective charac-

[14] See Sect. 3D of the Onlife Background Note, Chap. 11.

[15] The critical importance of attention is at the core of the chapter of Stefana Broadbent and Claire Lobet-Maris.

[16] There is resonance between plurality and the approach of the relational self as proposed by Charles Ess in his chapter as well as with the related section in the Onlife Manifesto.

ter of identity). This threefold understanding of plurality (equality, specificity, and reflectivity) undermines radically an omniscience-omnipotence utopia's worldview. Indeed, the equality between the engaged persons or entities subvert the asymmetry created by the polarization in terms of cause and effect; the specificity of each entity is a firewall against considering someone as an effect soluble in a cause or as a bundle of attributes, hence, it is an anchor against instrumentalisation; lastly, the partly hidden identity undermines the omniscient-omnipotent utopia, as each of us has to admit that s/he needs the others to access to his or her identity.

From this understanding of plurality and natality springs a specific understanding of human freedom. Human freedom is not about avoiding, escaping or vanishing limits or about being as close as possible to omniscience and omnipotence, but it is instead anchored in the capacity to begin, to live among peers and access to our own identity through their recognition of our speech and action.

"*Since action is the political activity par excellence, natality and not mortality, may be the central category of political, as distinguished from metaphysical, thought*" (Arendt 1959, p. 11): the omniscience and omnipotence utopia, as an underlying rationale for policy-making, can thus be seen as an ill-defined transposition of a metaphysical thought into a political thought. And this ill-defined transposition threatens to collapse the public space.

For these reasons, it is important to nurture natality and plurality, as powerful antidotes and alternatives to omniscience and omnipotence. Like the Thracian servant girl laughing about Thales falling in the well while looking at the stars[17], the natality-plurality tenant is laughing at the aspirant to omniscience-omnipotence trying hard to jump over his or her shadow[18].

4 Reclaiming Distinctions in the Light of Plurality and Natality

4.1 Public and Private

For Arendt, the private space is where necessities are dealt with and the public space is where men— and I will add women[19]—enjoy plurality and freedom, through the revelatory character of speech and action: "*life without speech and without action […] has ceased to be a human life because it is no longer lived among men*" (Arendt

[17] Famous anecdote in Plato, Theaetetus, 174A.

[18] In Configuring the networked self (2012). New Haven: Yale University Press, Julie Cohen is providing a remarkable analysis of the policy challenges in a hyperconnected era, in a natality and plurality perspective. I see a great proximity between natality, as set out here, and her "semantic discontinuity".

[19] The gender reading of Arendt is a most interesting issue that is not addressed in this contribution. Those interested may enjoy Feminist Interpretations of Arendt, edited by Bonnie Honig (1995. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press.).

1959, p. 157). In her view, the public is loaded with more ontological dignity than the private, because it is where freedom can be experienced.

The private, as still visible in the etymology, meant originally to be deprived from being among equals. Nowadays, privacy is hardly understood as "being deprived" from anything! On the contrary: freedom is more on the side of the private, and the rule of law on the side of the public. Property is associated with wealth and accumulation, while property and wealth used to be only the pre-condition for engaging in the public realm. Action has been substituted by behaviours, or by fabrication. In tyranny, as in mass society, "*men have become entirely private, that is, they have been deprived of seeing and hearing others, of being seen and being heard by them*" (Arendt 1959, p. 53).

Freedom has changed sides: privacy is now perceived as one way to protect freedom, while publicity is more perceived as the realm of constraints (rule of law, accountability, transparency, justification, surveillance, etc…), than as the realm of enjoying plurality and freedom.

It is interesting to note that Arendt attributes the dissolution of the public/private distinction and the profound change of their meaning to political modernity. In her terms, the invasion of the social in the public realm, in the form of the nation state, which can be seen as a huge household, joined up with the ancestral "*great temptation, for men of action no less than for men of thought, to find a substitute for action in the hope that the realm of human affairs may escape the haphazardness and moral irresponsibility inherent in a plurality of agents*" (Arendt 1959, p. 197).

The Arendtian axiomatic reset is not about going back to the Greek polis: pushing labour and work out of the public sphere, and concentrating politics on action only is not a credible option in the twenty-first century. However, the Arendtian tripartition of the *vita activa* in labour, work and action remains inspirational as it reminds us that labour (and necessity) and work (and causality) cannot account for the totality of the human experience: action (and plurality and freedom) has to have a place! For Arendt, the meaning of politics is freedom. If indeed, omnipotence and omniscience were a possibility, there would be no room for politics, as politics is precisely the place where we experience the noblest part of the human condition, i.e. plurality and natality. In the *vita activa* of the twenty-first century, the labour-work-action tripartition should not be seen hierarchically, i.e., with action, the public and the agora on the top and labour, the private and the home on the bottom: instead, labour, work and action form a trio generating a 3D-space. Failing to recognize action as a third dimension ends up in a degenerative perception of the human condition and a flattening of the human experience.

Arendt mapped the private/public distinction with idealized representations of the home and the agora as they were supposed to be in Greek Antiquity. There and then, the private was the household, the place where women and slaves took care of the necessities of life, while the public was the space where men, freed from the necessities of life, could experience freedom, among equals. It is obvious that the public/private distinction does not correspond anymore to the distinction agora/home. It is my view that the public/private distinction can most usefully be redescribed in the twenty-first century by indexing it primarily on the freedom/necessity polarity, and

by leaving aside the space distinction (household vs. agora), or the gender or social one (men vs. women and slaves).

With that in mind, the private realm is where and when humans are bound by necessity, deprived from appearance among equals, and thereby, confined in a pre-political, infra-human life, while the public realm is where and when human beings experience plurality, i.e. equality, specificity and reflectivity, notably through speech and action. The experience of appearing to others as a *who* or as a *what* has little to do with the place where the relationship takes place. Consequently, the distinction between the public and the private has more to do with what is at stake in the relationship rather than *where* it takes place.

If we are considered, not as ourselves, but as a number (ID-number), an attribute (the amount of wealth, or a set of skills) or as a function (a consumer, a parent, a job holder), this is not a public appearance, but rather a private setting even if the relationship is between a so-called private entity and a so-called public entity. Indeed, then, the *who* does not matter; there is no plurality, but only functional interactions that can be modelled, calculated, and anticipated. This functional approach to relationships is close to what was meant by being confined in the home, as the home is the metaphor for the place where persons, instead of appearing to others for who they are, are confined to fulfilling the tasks they are expected to.

Arendt recognizes that plurality can best be experienced at city-level. "*The larger the population in any given body politic, the more likely it will be the social rather than the political that constitutes the public realm*" (Arendt 1959, p. 39). The Nation-State is where conformity and mass behaviour substitutes for plurality. This can then only be worse for continental organisations, such as the EU, or for global governance bodies, such as the UN! With big numbers, plurality degenerates into mere and unendorsed interdependence, while natality and its inherent openness and unpredictability are perceived only under the categories of uncertainty and risk.

4.2 Agents, Artefacts and Nature

Reclaiming a public/private distinction where the public is where plurality is experienced while the private is the realm of functionality leads to the need to recognize that plurality can also apply to intermediaries, legal entities, organisations, institutions, not only to humans. Let's call 'agents' those beings who recognize their interactions with the other beings as one of plurality, i.e. beings (i) granting other similar beings with equal status to themselves, (ii) appearing for their *who* and being recognized as such, and (iii) partly blind to themselves and aware that it is by their appearance to others that they experience identity and freedom.

With that in mind, the EU can be seen as a public space where Member States, as agents, experience plurality. The EU can then be seen as a space of appearance for Member States, where they disclose their "*who*" and not their "*what*" and where

they depend upon each other to experience who they are. The same applies at UN level. Privileging plurality over functionality is recognizing that, for the public space, reaching goals matter much less than securing a space where agents whose identities are singular and reflective interact together in a constructive and meaningful way[20]. It is also recognizing that freedom does not flaw from sovereignty and power but from interactions and meanings.

This characterisation of agents, be they human or not, as beings acknowledging that their freedom is anchored in plurality rather than in sovereignty, offers also a criterion for distinguishing agents from artefacts. Indeed, we suggest stating that agents are those beings with a *who* that matters, while artefacts are those beings whose identity correspond *only* to their external and functional description, i.e., beings for which the *what* (and maybe the *how)* only matters. An artefact is an entity whose function corresponds to what it is meant for. It is fully heteronomous. Going back to Arendt tripartition, i.e., labour, work, action, artefacts are the outcome of work, while agents are those engaged in action. Hence, the difference between agents and artefacts cannot be based on objective differences about their essence, but rather on the type of interactions they are engaged with, i.e. either plurality or functionality, or put in other words, action or work. If humans are considered only for their attributes or the tasks they have to fulfil or the role they have to play, although they are humans, they are *artefactualized*, and this only by the way they are represented, but nonetheless very effectively. Once someone is represented as an artefact, there is no further barrier against considering him or her as such.

So, agents are those beings self-aware that plurality is a key component of their own condition, i.e. those beings granting other similar beings the triple recognition underlying plurality: (i) the recognition that they are equal, (ii) the recognition that they are unique and specific, and (iii) the recognition that they are in need of the others to experience their own identity and freedom.

Then, if agents are those who, aware of their plurality, inhabit the world and shape it, notably with artefacts they build and control, nature can then be defined as what is beyond the control of agents, what stands around them. It includes artefacts, sensors, even robots to the extent that they escape agents' control, and have become part of the environment that they have to navigate within and make sense of. This artefactual nature is the reservoir of new beginnings, as we used to consider "virgin nature" to be, before sustainability issues arose.

Hence, the difference between nature and artefacts is not anymore based on the difference between what is "given", on the one hand, and what is fabricated, on the other hand, but rather on the difference between what is beyond our control, on the one hand, and what is under control, on the other hand. Of course, this has also incidences on the distinction between what we have to cope with and what we can be held responsible[21] for. The dividing line separating the remit of fate from the remit of responsibility is changing in function of time, space, and scale or granularity.

[20] This echoes with Richard Rorty in Contingency, Irony and Solidarity, Cambridge University Press, 1989; and with the notion of multi-agent-systems (MAS) as proposed by Luciano Floridi in his chapter.

[21] Responsibility issues are developed by Ugo Pagallo and Judith Simon in their respective chapters.

Practical wisdom in a hyperconnected era consists, for each agent, be they humans, organisations, or institutions, in acknowledging where this dividing line lies, in each life situation, and in a perspective of natality and plurality.

Mistaking agents for artefacts brings about a world whose horizon is omniscience and omnipotence, and comes dangerously close to totalitarianist forms of thinking. Mistaking nature for artefacts lead to misallocation of responsibilities, either by overestimating them or underestimating them[22].

5 The Arendtian Axiomatic Reset in a Hyperconnected Era

5.1 The Proper Mix of Literacy and Policy…

If action is indeed characterised as a beginning whose consequences can never be undone, scientific discoveries and technological developments are action by *excellence*, as they cannot be undone and correspond to new beginnings. Thinking about what happens to us and framing the challenges in a hyperconnected era is one of our generation's tasks, and this ought to be done by balancing fears with confidence and control with wonder. Indeed, to reinforce and nurture the public space in a hyperconnected era, there is an urgent need to balance the omniscience-omnipotence utopia, pervaded by fear and control-seeking, with the plurality and natality perspectives, pervaded by confidence and wonder. This balancing generates a space where fears and risks are compensated by the confidence in beginnings, shared intelligence and practical wisdom. It generates a space where meanings are rooted in "in-betweens" rather than in "the more, the better" and where challenges are approached with "both/and" dualities rather than with "either/or" dilemmas.

To some extent, it invites to shift away from the dominance of a risk governance approach to a literacy approach. Literacy is the set of skills, understood in a wide sense, which enables the experience of plurality. Hence, abilities to communicate are central to literacy understood in the wide sense. In a pre-digital context, literacy is about reading and writing, but it goes much beyond the technical ability and reaches out to the ability to understand, to contextualize and to be persuasive. For example, each of us learn very young and, most often, very painfully, the subtleties of communication. We all experienced the differences between what we want to say to our mother or to our best friend, or between what we want to say in confidence, and what we want to say loud and clear. When things go wrong, we learn and we adapt, and little by little, we acquire that extended literacy. Literacy is made of a mix of technical, social and ethical skills and considerations. It is also highly evolutive.

[22] This echoes the point made in the paragraph 2.1. of the Onlife Manifesto: "…it is hard to identify who has control of what, when and within which scope. Responsibilities and liabilities are hard to allocate clearly and endorse unambiguously".

As put nicely by Siva Vaidhyanathan[23], in the hyperconnected era, "we are all babies"! Indeed, who is aware of what is accessible to whom when engaging on social networks, browsing on the internet, buying online, walking around with a mobile phone on, *etc*... Acquiring a digital literacy[24] is a collective and societal endeavour that requires an uptake and "naturalisation" of knowledge and codes, about the different modes of communication in a hyperconnected era, and their consequences for plurality. It is about adapting common sense, fairness, respect, responsibility, freedom, and privacy into the new worldly conditions. Shaping this new version of literacy, which can be called a digital literacy, is an emergent and ongoing process: there is no monopoly for taking part in such a game. Policy making has surely a contribution to make in this endeavour, but it would be wrong to believe that policy can deliver such literacy, as it is wrong to believe that policy could prevent risk in an absolute manner. In the societal and multi-stakeholder endeavour of shaping this emerging literacy, there is a role for policy-making, as there is a role for each other stakeholder. Policy-making, by being aware of the current emergence of new forms of literacy, can identify where and how it can be responsive and add value to the workings of societal intelligence and the ongoing reshaping of the value content of notions such as privacy or identity, and adapt the policy frameworks accordingly[25]. This is not an easy task, as it may call for fundamental and uncomfortable revisions, leading to very sensitive transitions. In the next section, we will exemplify how policy and literacy can complement each other to address new challenges in a hyperconnected reality.

5.2 Coping With the Risk of "Reality Theft"

There are circumstances where it is accepted that fooling each other is part of the game: for example, on the April fool's day. It is also societally acceptable to fool someone to his or her own advantage, for example with a surprise party on his or her birthday, or else to fool someone with his or her consent, for example in artistic performances, where it is particularly appreciated when the scenery and the performance is close to reality so that it is credible. However, beyond these very special circumstances, societies rest on a general consensus that fooling should be avoided, and there are many rules, institutions and infrastructures to outlaw and make life difficult to those trying to fool their peers. Fooling others is indeed breaching plurality. Beyond being inherently unfair, it leads to a "suspicion of all against all", dissolves trust, prevents any form of togetherness and dissolves plurality. Fooling others knowingly and purposefully results *de facto* in a self-exclusion from the community of peers and from the ideal public space. These considerations hint to the fact that there is a link between trust, literacy and policy. It is part of literacy to distinguish socially acceptable fooling and unacceptable fooling. It is also part of

[23] http://www.cbc.ca/spark/2011/05/full-interview-siva-vaidhyanathan-on-the-googlization-of-everything/.

[24] Doug Belshaw is one of the scholars that have developed a very interesting perspective on what a digital literacy entails (e.g., on his book The Essential Elements of Digital Literacies).

[25] This echoes with the notion of critical technology accompaniment proposed by Peter-Paul Verbeek in his chapter.

literacy to be equipped to cope with or resist acceptable or basic fooling tentatives. In that respect, policy and regulation are only a complement to literacy and common sense.

With that modest attitude, it is important to rethink and actualise what fooling means in a hyperconnected era, particularly in view of the blurring between reality and virtuality[26]. There are at least two facets in this rethinking: (i) how do the "old" means of dealing with this issue survive in the hyperconnected world and (ii) are there new issues arising?

In the pre-digital world, the distinction between an original and a copy used to be a mean to counter fooling and to help each agent distinguishing "reality" from fake: in the digital world, the distinction between original and copy has lost the realistic dimension on which it has been established. Hence, for example, all measures that were built on this distinction need to be fundamentally rethought in a hyperconnected world[27], to avoid perpetuating outdated distinctions, which stop being effective and lead to the proliferation of an absurd complexity. This is only mentioned as an example; here is not the place for jumping to concrete policy recommendations.

Beyond the dissolution of the distinction between original and copies, the hyperconnected era expands the possibilities for "reality theft", in the following more fundamental way. In the pre-digital era, it is reasonably easy, for an agent, to distinguish if the environment encountered has been "made up" for, or tailored to, him or her. In these early days of the hyperconnected reality, where "we are all babies" when it comes to digital literacy, this distinction is much more difficult to make. Most of us are unable to distinguish if and when the price offered in an online environment or the result of a search depend from the use by the provider or by the search engine of personal data or profiling information, or if they would be the same for anybody else. Why does it matter? Let's compare this to a pre-digital situation by imagining the following situation: I walk around in a shopping mall and stop in front of a dress I find beautiful. Imagine that the more I look at the dress the higher the price! I would be enraged and walk away, because I have the means to notice it. This is part of the pre-digital mix of literacy, policy and regulation. In the online environment, there is no equivalent easy and commonsensical way to identify if, when the price goes up, it is because the last seats of that flight (if I am booking a flight) have been taken by others, or if it is because the operator is making use of my desire to buy a flight ticket to raise the price. It is my view that people are entitled to know, when engaging on the web, if the result of their search or the price offered to them is making use of information about them, or not[28]. It has to do with fairness and dignity, more than with privacy. It is also an enabler of plurality. There may be a role for policy-making to accompany and facilitate the deployment of an increased digital literacy, by ensuring that agents have the mean to orient themselves in a fair way in

[26] See Sect. 3A of the Onlife Background Note, Chap. 11.

[27] This issue, among others, has been pointed to in a meeting discussing the societal perspective on cybersecurity http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/ict/security/docs/societal.pdf.

[28] The challenge of profiling is addressed more fully in Mireille Hildebrandt's chapter.

the online sphere and in the onlife experience. Here, the point is not to shape means of control, but rather to provide tools for enabling each one to orient him or herself.

6 Conclusion: Reclaiming Plurality

In this contribution, I have argued that acknowledging natality and embracing plurality is a much-needed stance for making sense of what happens to us with the digital transition. Indeed, staying exclusively focused on an omniscience/omnipotence utopia, and the control-seeking perspective pervading it, prevents policy-makers and all other stakeholders from experiencing freedom in this emerging hyperconnected era and from benefitting of the societal intelligence and resilience. Those arguing for the need to seek more control often do so on the basis that failing to do so would lead us in a dangerous relativistic "anything goes" area. The fear of this "anything goes" is ignoring—at least—three essential features of the human condition, i.e., (i) that human beings are not only "goal seekers", but also "meaning shapers", (ii) that control-seekers are always short of their own expectations and sooner or later self-defeated, and (iii) that human beings have a conscience and host an inner dialogue, which is what makes plurality possible. If, by accident, this faculty of inner dialogue, which is nothing else but thought, would be denied so that we would all perceive others as merely functional beings, then indeed, it would be the end of the presence of human beings on earth[29].

The three proposals of the Onlife Manifesto, i.e., the relational self, the literacy approach, and the need to care for attention, are not "ready-made" solutions meant to solve problems in an instrumental way. They are not items issued from some minds to be transmitted to other minds, like packages on a packet-switched network. They are instead proposals that can bear fruits only after having been metabolized by those receiving them.

The relational self denotes those in need of plurality, that is those beings with a satiety threshold, not reducible to their attributes or to a function, and whose identity is revealed by speech and action in presence of others. It points to the need of refraining from thinking about ourselves and the other selves in functional ways and recalling that others, like ourselves, are in need of meaning. The mutual interactions of relational selves give rise to the production of new meanings and affordances, which constitute the ground for the literacy of a society at a given time. Policies should be in resonance with and responsive to the development stage of that literacy. Last, attention is the best we have to offer to each other, it is what links together the fact of being oneself and of appearing to others; it is the fluid that makes plurality a reality: considering attention as a commodity to be merely captured and exchanged can only lead to a serious deterioration, if not a dissolution, of plurality.

[29] This is one of my takes from Arendt's Eichamnn in Jerusalem: a report on the banality of evil (1963).

All this calls for policy-making to nurture a wide and inclusive understanding of the rationale of its action: besides interests, costs and benefits, optimisation and trade-offs, a key purpose of policy-making is to adapt the regulatory framework to meanings, norms and values as they emerge and crystallise in society, and to maintain and foster a vivid sense of natality and plurality. Indeed if, together with Arendt, we believe that the purpose of politics is freedom, it is high time to endorse and make sense of the world we are living in; it is high time to remember humans, and anybody else claiming an agent's status, are deemed to be equal, singular and …in need of each other to be recognized as who they are. Plurality takes place among agents who recognize their satiety and interact in order to reveal their identity. It is high time for plurality to substitute, or at least complete, the other metaphors underlying policy-making, i.e. the invisible hand (which encourages the pursuit of one's own interest, decoupled from all forms of empathy towards other selves) or the competitive race (which considers others as competitors to be defeated). Generationally speaking, the task of the "day" is, for all, to nurture a common understanding of what plurality means in a hyperconnected era, and for policy-makers, to partner with society, instead of parenting it!

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